ISTITUTO ITALIANO PER IL MEDIO
ED ESTREMO ORIENTE

SERIE ORIENTALE ROMA

SOTTO LA DIREZIONE
DI
GIUSEPPE TUCCI

VOLUME XIII

ROMA
Is. M. E. O.
1974

SERIE ORIENTALE ROMA
XIII

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VAJRACCHEDIKĀ PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ

EDITED AND TRANSLATED
WITH INTRODUCTION AND GLOSSARY

2nd Edition, with Corrections and Additions

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1974

INTRODUCTION

The state of the text.

The text printed in this edition is substantially that of Max Mueller (Bibliography No. 1). I have inserted his pagination in square brackets, so that readers can verify quotations based on it. My own quotations always refer to the chapters into which M. Mueller divided the text. They go back to the heir apparent of Wu-ti, first emperor of the Liang dynasty (+ 531), who introduced them into Kumārajīva's Chinese translation. M. Mueller's edition is based on three documents, all comparatively late. They are 1. a manuscript from Japan (=J), described by him on pages 16-17; 2. a blockprint from China (=Ch); 3. a bilingual Tibetan blockprint (=T) from Peking, which gives the sanskrit text in both Lantsa characters and Tibetan transliteration, and adds a Tibetan interlinear translation. Another copy of the same blockprint exists in the London School of Oriental Studies (Bibl. no. 11), and with its help I have occasionally checked on M. Mueller's readings.

For the notes I have used a number of other documents, which are here enumerated in their chronological order:

The two oldest sources are *Kumārajīva's Chinese translation* (Bibl. no. 4), and *Asaṅga's* and *Vasubandhu's* commentaries (Bibl. no. 32, 33). In spite of its great antiquity, Kumārajīva's version throws little light on the problems of textual criticism. This is partly because it was not made directly from a sanskrit original, and partly because it is

less concerned with literal accuracy than the later Tibetan translations were. Most of the divergencies from M. Mueller's text are noted by de Harlez (Bibl. no. 27), although we must bear in mind that at his time, 60 years ago, Buddhist terminology was not always well understood. In some cases, where they are borne out by other early sources, they testify to an earlier state of the text (as at 3, 13e, 14a, 17d and 31). At other times we cannot be so sure, as when Kumārajīva has at 17e: *amahākāyaḥ* instead of *akāyaḥ*, at 25 *abālapṛthagjanā* instead of *ajanā*, or when the title of the book at 13a is given as *vajraprajñāpāramitā* instead of simply *prajñāpāramitā*.[1] At 10c, where he paraphrases *apratiṣṭhitaṃ cittam* by « pure, translucent thought », we have most likely to do with one of those commentatorial asides with which Kumārajīva was in the habit of elucidating his translations when they were read out.[2] Here he reminds his audience of the Prajñāpāramitā teaching about the *prabhāsvara-citta*.[3] Many of the verbal differences, abbreviations and omissions may very well be accounted for by Kumārajīva's methods of translating rather than by a divergent sanskrit original. To give one final instance, the verse in 32-a reads:

« All conditioned dharmas,
Are like a dream, a mock show, bubble, or reflected image [4],
They are like dew, and also like lightning.
Thus should they be considered ».

1) The prefix *vajra-* is used rather sparingly in the Larger Prajñāpāramitās, and there indicates an 'adamantine' *samādhi* (A xxx 491, P 82, 172, 199, 201), or *dharma* (A xxxi 525), or *citta* (P 169), or *jñāna* (P 233). The combination *vajra-prajñāpāramitā* is not found anywhere.

2) Demiéville, JAs 1950, pp. 375-395.

3) A i 5-6 = P 121-123 = S 490-503.

4) *Ying* is more likely to mean *pratibimba* (Soothill-Hodous 432a), rather than 'shadow', as some translators have it. In the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras *dharmas* are often compared to a *pratibimba* (e. g. P 4, 154, 179, 192, 226, 254, f. 585a), but never, as far as I know, to a shadow.

It may simply be due to the exigencies of Chinese versification that this verse gives only 6, instead of 9, comparisons. I have therefore noted Kumārajīva only on the few occasions when he seems to definitely point to a different sanskrit original.

Next come two old *manuscripts*. The one, of ca 500 A.D., from *Eastern Turkestan*, has been edited by Pargiter (Bibl. no. 3). It is unfortunately incomplete. Three passages are missing from it, — folio 1, from the beginning of the Sutra to the middle of chapter 2, folio 3 to 5, representing the text from the middle of ch. 4 to ch. 10, as well as folio 12, corresponding to chapters 16c to 17b. In addition many words in the remaining portions are illegible. The manuscript differs from M. Mueller's text chiefly by the omission of stereotyped phrases and redundant repetitions. On occasions it has preserved an older Prakritic form which later scribes have regularised. Wherever the later manuscripts give *bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ* it is content with *bodhisattva* alone (except at 32a). I have noted this particularity only for the second folio of this Ms. In my collation of this and the following manuscript I have generally ignored minute differences in spelling, etc. There are always the original publications to turn to. The *Gilgit Manuscript* (Bibl. no. 3), of the 5th or 6th century, is a valuable early source for those parts of the text which it covers, i.e.

for ch. 13c to the middle of 14e, and for 15b to 32b. Of 12 folios seven are preserved, i.e. folios 5, and 7 to 12. This manuscript is even more sparing of unnecessary repetitions than Pargiter's, but the process of sanskritization has gone further in it.

About 600 we have an important document in *Dharmagupta's* Chinese translation (Bibl. n. 7), which sets out to reproduce the sanskrit original in Chinese with great literal fidelity. With its help, and that of the other documents listed here, it would be possible to reconstruct with a high degree of accuracy the sanskrit text as it was extant about that time. Since this has not been our purpose in this edition, no use has been made of Dharmagupta here.

Next we may mention the *Khotanese* version (Bibl. no. 13). Of uncertain date, probably some time between the 8th and 10th century,[5] this is much shorter than the sanskrit text. It omits a number of chapters, i.e. 13c, 15b, 16c, 17d (mostly), 18b-25, 27, 28, 30a, 30b (except the last three sentences). Chapters 6 and 7 show some variations from the sanskrit text, and in chapters 9 and 32a there are what appear to be commentatorial additions.

The text on which the *Tibetan* translation (=t) (Bibl. no. 10), dating from about 800 A.D., is based, is on the contrary very similar to the sanskrit text as we possess it. I have treated it as equivalent to a sanskrit manuscript of the 8th century, and have noted all the more important deviations in the footnotes. There is a marked tendency to abbreviate stereotyped phrases, and it seems to me probable

5) The evidence for the date has been surveyed by Sten Konow in *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* xi, 1938, pp. 25 sq. It turns out to be inconclusive.

that these attained their present length only through the labours of scribes over the centuries. Clichés, like the one about the 'latter days', or on 'being seen by the Buddhas', are shortened. It would be tempting to infer that all the passages of our sanskrit text which are omitted by the Tibetan have been added after 800. That this is not always the case is shown by the three lines which the Tibetan, as well as the Gilgit Ms, omits at the beginning of 18b, and which seem surely redundant enough. Nevertheless they are found already in Kumārajīva. It is probable that, like the other Prajñāpāramitā texts, also the Vajracchedikā circulated in different recensions which agreed in all essentials but differed in minor details. Most of the material on which the study of these recensions could be based has now, however, perished.

All that need be said about the *bilingual blockprint* (Bibl. no. 11) is that it differs from the Kanjur in some details of the phrasing (e.g. at 28), and that it does not always (as at 32a) correspond to its own sanskrit text. Weller's work on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* has shown that a closer study of the Tibetan translations reveals many complicated problems which are not always capable of solution, and it seems to me probable that further study of the numerous Tibetan manuscripts and blockprints would reveal a greater range of variation that I have noted here.

Finally we must mention that parts of the text are found in *quotations* in other works. As far as I could see they are: The beginning of chapter 3 in *Sādhanamālā* p. 26. Parts of chapters 4 and 16 in *Śikṣāsamuccaya* 275, 11-13 and 171, 9-12. Parts of 9 and 10c, as well as 26b, in *Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā* 442, 13-443, 9, and 421. 26a-b in *Prasannapadā*

xxii 448, 12-15. The first line of 26b is also quoted, without indication of source, in *Abhisamayālaṅkārāloka* p. 228, and 32a in *Kauśika Prajñāpāramitā* (section V). These quotations in works written in the 7th to 9th centuries show nowhere any significant deviations from our text.

As a matter of fact, if we except the Khotanese version, all the documents referred to differ only in minor details, and the textual variants pratically never effect the sense. In one case we can infer that a passage (17c-d) is a later addition which has crept into the text after 800 A.D. It is also doctrinally suspect, since, contradicting the whole of Buddhist tradition (cf. also this Sutra itself at 27), it teaches that the Tathagata is equivalent to the *uccheda* of dharmas. I have omitted it from both my edition and translation. For the rest, the text which we have is in all essentials the same text on which Asaṅga and Vasubandhu commented about 400 A.D. It is, of course, possible that that itself has grown from a smaller text, which, as E. J. Thomas once suggested to me, may have originally ended at 13b with *tenocyate prajñāpāramitā*. The *Bhadramāyākāravyākaraṇa* (page 136) and several Pali Suttas [6] end on a similar note. Chapters 13c to 32a may then have been added at a later date. It is in this connection interesting to note that most of them have been omitted in the Khotanese version, which may thus preserve a more archaic condition of the text. In addition, these chapters seem to be unduly chaotic and repetitive, and a principle of coherence is difficult to find in the sequence of the chapters and arguments. It has even been

6) e. g. Majjhima Nikāya, Sutta 12. Ko nāmo ayaṃ bhante dhammapariyāyo? Tasmātiha tvaṃ Nāgasamāla imaṃ dhammapariyāyaṃ Lomahaṃsanapariyāyo ti va naṃ dhārehīti. — Similarly also ibd. Sutta 18, 115, and DN no. 1.

suggested that after chapter 16 a confusion of the leaves may have taken place at some time, and that the state of the text can be accounted for by assuming that either the leaves of the text got displaced, or that glosses in the course of copying got mixed up with the text itself. Be that as it may, we find the early commentators of about 400 A.D. already labouring hard to show the logic behind the existing text, and we have no documents which go back far enough to allow us to speak with any authority about the text which may have preceded it at some earlier time.

The Title.

The title, *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā*, is attested by the colophon of several manuscripts, from 500 A.D. onwards, by the Chinese translation after Dharmagupta, by the Tibetan translation and by the quotations in *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, etc. From the number of its ślokas it was also known as the *Triśatikā Prajñāpārāmitā*, the Perfection of Wisdom in 300 Lines.[7]

It is usual, following Max Mueller, to render Vajracchedikā sūtra as « Diamond Sutra ». There is no reason to discontinue this popular usage, but, strictly speaking, it is more than unlikely that the Buddhists here understood *vajra*

7) In E. Lamotte's « La Somme du Grand Véhicule », 1939, p. 195 we read: « Dans la Triśatikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra, il est dit: Quand on parle d'une vertu, on parle de toutes les vertus ». From the absence of this sentence in our Vajracchedikā, one might infer that there was another recension of the version in 300 Lines which contained it. It is, however, more likely that this is an oversight on the part of Prof. Lamotte, and that the reference is to Vasubandhu's commentary to the Vajracchedikā (Bibl. no. 33), i.e. the comment on chapter 3.

as the material substance which we call 'diamond'. The term is familiar from many Buddhist texts, including the large Prajñāpāramitā Sutras (see note 1). Everywhere it refers to the mythical 'thunderbolt', and denotes irresistible strength, both passively and actively. The title therefore means 'the perfection of wisdom which cuts like the thunderbolt', or, less probably, 'which could cut even a thunderbolt'. For the idea we may compare Mātṛceheta who likens the speech of the Lord to « the sun which again and again thrusts aside the darkness of uncognition (*ajñāna*), and to Śakra's weapon (the *vajra*) splitting the mountains of pride ».[8] The metaphor of « cutting » finds expression also in images which occasionally show the Prajñāpāramitā [9], and very frequently Mañjuśrī, her male counterpart, with a sword. In the definition of the Dhammasangani [10] *paññā* is already called a 'sword', because, as Buddhaghosa [11] comments, it cuts through the defilements. It may also be said to cut through the darkness of ignorance, and in some images of Mañjuśrī the sword ends in a flame.

8) Śatapañcāśatka v. 74 — The idea is not dissimilar in Lucan's comparison of Julius Caesar with a thunderbolt (Pharsalia I, 151-157):

qualiter expressum ventis per nubila fulmen
aetheris impulsi sonitu mundique fragore
emicuit rupitque diem populosque paventes
terruit obliqua praestringens lumina flamma:
in sua templa furit, nullaque exire vetante
materia magnamque cadens magnamque revertens
dat stragem late sparsosque recolligit ignes.

9) e. g. the *prajñāpāramitā* in the assembly of Ākāśagarbha in the Garbhadhātumaṇḍala of the Shingon school. 1 — Cd in my list in « Oriental Art », II 2, 1949, p. 52.

10) n. 16, paññā-sattham. cf. also Theragāthā no. 1095.

11) Asl 148, kilesa-cchedana. cf. Jāt. iv 174.

The Historical Context.

The Vajracchedikā is one of the about 40 texts which make up the Prajñāpāramitā literature. The enthusiastic production of Prajñāpāramitā Sutras at the beginning of the Christian era had resulted in works of such length, unwieldiness and chaotic arrangement, that, as I have shown in an article in *East and West* [12]), the faithful found it rather hard to cope with them. They met the needs of the new situation by composing, between 300 and 500 A.D., on the one hand a number of versified summaries, such as the Abhisamayālaṅkāra, and, on the other, a number of smaller Sutras of a philosophical character. The best-known of these is the Vajracchedikā, which has attained a quite extraordinary reputation in Mahāyāna countries. The Sutra is, indeed, one of the most profound, sublime and influential of all Mahāyāna texts. Its phraseology and style is that of the Prajñāpāramitā Sutras which preceded it, and on at least eight occasions it contains distinct reminiscences from the Aṣṭasāhasrikā.[13]

Arranged as a dialogue between Subhūti and the Buddha, the Sutra is confined to a few topics only. As in the large Prajñāpāramitā Sutras much space is given over to

12) V 3, 1954, pp. 192-197.
13) ch. 3 corresponds to A i 20.
6, the phrase about 'being known to the Buddhas', etc., occurs at A x 224.
7, the last sentence reproduces A ii 36.
8, the phrase, 'issued from it is enlightenment', etc., reproduces A iii 58 and xxviii 463.
12, 15c, the remark about the *caitya*: at A iii 57.
14d, the play on *pāramitā* and *aparimāṇa*, similarly at A ii 45.
17b. The prediction by Dīpaṅkara also at A ii 48, xix 368.
18b, the phrase that 'past thought is not got at', etc., at A xii 268.

stressing the merit acquired by preserving it. These propagandistic passages, tiresome as they are, may have had something to do with the Sutra's success and survival. The remainder is concerned with metaphysics. The 'Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas', so conspicuous in the earlier texts, are now lost sight of, and, without any reference to them, the doctrine is expressed briefly, directly and succinctly.

The Basic Ideas.

The message of the Sutra can be summed up under five headings:

I. One should not perceive a « self, a being, a living soul, or a person ». As I understand it, these four recurring key terms should be understood as follows: (1) The 'self' (*ātman*) is the supposed centre round which all our belongings are organised, that part of ourselves with reference to which we say, 'This is mine, I am this, this is myself'. (2) A 'being' (*sattva*), is a separate individual, who differentiates what seems to be inside him from that which seems to be outside. (3) The 'soul' (*jīva*) is the unifying source of an individual's life. Like *psyche* or *anima* it is the vivifying and unifying force within each organism, but it lasts only for the span of one life-time, from conception to death. (4) A 'person' (*pudgala*) is a 'being' that is looked at from the outside, as a social entity. Here we consider the part played in different environments, and the self-identification which results from the relative constancy of one's role in each environment.[14)]

14) The four are concisely defined at H 81 (to A i 19): tatra-ahaṃkāra-

II. One should not perceive a dharma, or separate entity, anywhere, because there is none.

III. Everything is not itself.

IV. One should not establish one's thoughts anywhere.

V. The Buddha and his enlightenment are strictly transcendental.

With the orthodox doctrine of *anattā* as its starting point, the Sutra thus develops the consequence of seeing all things as void of self. Although the term 'empty' is not even once mentioned, the doctrine of emptiness is nevertheless its main theme, and it is established in an *ontological*, *psychological* and *logical* form:

Ontologically, the selflessness of everything means that there is no dharma (as at II). Even the ultimates of Buddhist analysis do not exist in themselves, nor does the doctrine which contains that analysis.

Psychologically, we are urged (as at IV), to « raise a thought » which is not fixed, or attached, anywhere, or which does not stand about anywhere (ch. 10, 4), or which is supported nowhere, leans not on anything, does not depend on anything.

Logically, the Sutra teaches (as at III), that each one of the chief Buddhist concepts is equivalent to its contradictory opposite. A special formula is here employed to express this thought, i.e. « A mass of merit, a mass of

ādhāra-arthena-ātmā, āhito 'haṃkāra etasminn iti kṛtvā. sādana (sīdana-?)-ātmakatvāt sattvaḥ. jīvitendriya-vaśena-ānikāya-sabhāga-parisamāpter vartata iti jīvaḥ. punaḥ-punar gatiṣu līyata iti pudgalaḥ.

merit, as a no-mass that has been taught by the Tathagata. In that sense has He spoken of it as a 'mass of merit' » (ch. 19, 8). The same, or a similar formula, is used for beings (14f, 17f, 21b), the marks of a Tathagata (5, 13d, 20b, 26a), the constituents (dharmas) of a Buddha (8; cf. 17e), the four Fruits (9a-d), Buddha-fields (10b, 17g), personalities (10c), particles of dust (13c), true perception (14a), the perfection of patience (14d), the perception, or notion, of beings (14f), endowment with a body (17e), trends of thought (18b), the Tathagata's perfect body (20a), the demonstration of Dharma (21a), wholesome dharmas (23), seizing on a self (25), foolish common people (25), the Tathagata (29), collections of atoms (30a), world systems (30b), seizing on material objects (30b), the view of a self (31a) and the notion of dharma (31b).

In this connection the bold use of *tenocyate*, which occurs chiefly in the latter parts, is a special feature of this Sutra. *Tena* here has the meaning of 'therefore', in either the sense of 'that is why', or 'for that reason' [15], or in the sense of 'that is how', 'in that manner'. Pargiter's manuscript used *tad* in its place. The phrase is a common ingredient of Buddhist definitions and argumentations, in the texts of all schools [16], and it indicates a logical relation which is plausible and can be assented to. In this Sutra, however, it is used to indicate a paradoxical, inconclusive

15) It is equivalent to *tena kāraṇena* at P 476b, and to *tasmād* at P 485.

16) For definitions see e.g. M.N. 129: Sāriputto: pājānati pājānatī ti kho āvuso, sa tasmā paññā ti vuccati. — P 179: evam bodhisattvo mahāsattvo mahāsannāhasannaddhas, tenocyate bodhisattvo mahāsattva iti. — Or P 477b: prajñāpāramitāyāṃ tathatā antargatā..., tenocyate prajñāpāramiteti. — For an argumentation, see Śi 257, 11-13 (Pitṛ-putrasamāgama): antaśa ānantaryāny api bodhiḥ. tat kasya hetoḥ? aprakṛtikā hi Bhagavan bodhir, aprakṛtikāni ca pañca-ānantaryāni. tenocyate ānantaryāni bodhir iti.

and illogical relation between what precedes and what follows. It pregnantly brings out the opposition which exists between esoteric truth and mere speaking, between the true state of affairs as it is, and the words in which it is expressed. This is quite in keeping with the use of *tasmād* in the Hṛdaya. *Because*, we are there told, emptiness is the same as the skandhas, *therefore*, we are told, the exact opposite is true, i.e. that the skandhas are completely absent in emptiness. By abrogating the principle of contradiction [17], the logic of the Prajñāpāramitā differs from that of Aristotle in at least one fundamental point. A second point of difference will be touched upon soon.

The translation.

The translation is as literal as I could make it, to the extent of even reproducing the sanskrit syntax wherever it was possible to do so. Over a number of years it has circulated in typescript, and regularly encountered two criticisms, the one objecting to *dharma* being left untranslated, the other to *apratiṣṭhita* being rendered as 'unsupported'. In the first case I seem to have shirked the responsibilities of a translator, in the second to have chosen a harsh term which means almost nothing to a newcomer, who must indeed be rather disconcerted when he meets for the first time such a phrase as « unsupported he gives a gift ».

Now the term 'dharma' can very well be translated wherever it denotes the objects of the sixth sense, i.e. of mind, and accordingly I have rendered it as « mind-objects »,

17) See also my *Selected Sayings from the Perfection of Wisdom*, 1955, no. 95-100.

or « objects of mind », at 4, 9a, 10c, 14e. But the use of the word 'dharma' everywhere else in this Sutra includes, in deliberate ambiguity, usually three, and sometimes four, meanings: First of all it denotes the one ultimate reality as a fact, 'the Dharma'. Then, the Buddha's comprehension and teaching of that fact, the Dharma as 'doctrine'. In the compound *sad-dharma* it means only this, and I have accordingly translated 'good doctrine' at 6, 14b, 16b, 21b. But in nearly all cases it can also men '*a* dharma', that is to say an event seen as it is in ultimate reality, as understood by the Abhidharma teachings, which I must here take for granted. And, finally, the word on some occasions, for instance in the 'simile of the raft' at 6, also means 'good', the opposite, *a-dharma*, meaning 'bad'.

In the history of human thought different thinkers have preferred different logical rules. Some, the followers of Aristotle, have held that terms should be unambiguous, and, ideally, have one meaning only, in such a way that one word corresponds to one idea. Others again have chosen to load each one of their basic terms with a great number of varying meanings, and to them belong the followers of the Prajñāpāramitā. Their term *śūnyatā* is another case in point.[18] It is not here my task to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this approach. It is sufficient to say that it exists, strange as it may seem to the Aristoteleans, and that a translator, who, is, after all, a very subordinate person, must respect it. If the reader of the English translation is sometimes puzzled about the exact connotation of the word

18) See E. Conze, Meditations on Emptiness, *The Mahā Bodhi*, LXIII 5, 1955, pp. 203-211.

'dharma', he is in no worse position than the readers of the sanskrit original.

With regard to *a-pratiṣṭhita* we must bear in mind that the English language has never undergone the influence of Buddhist thought, and therefore often offers no ready-made equivalents for Buddhist concepts and attitudes. The best I can do is to give in the Glossary some other possible translations which indicate the range of its meaning. The reader will see that *apratiṣṭhita* is closely related to other keywords of the Prajñāpāramitā, such as *aniśrita*, *na sthātavyam*, *anālaya*, *anālīna*, *anupalambha*, and so on. It would lead us too far here to discuss all this in detail.

As for the *Glossary* at the end, there would have been little point in printing a full Vocabulary to the Sutra, most of the words occurring in it being in common use and well-known. We have been content to list 155 terms which offer some point of special interest or difficulty. To them we have added the Tibetan translation from the Kanjur, and the English equivalents adopted in this translation of mine, with alternative renderings where they seemed to be called for. In the case of the more difficult terms, particularly those neglected by Edgerton in his great Dictionary, I have added some explanations derived from such commentatorial material as is available, and provided parallels from other Prajñāpāramitā Sutras, taken from my unpublished Dictionary of these texts.

Homage to the Perfection of Wisdom, the Lovely, the Holy!

1. Thus have I heard at one time. The Lord dwelt at Śrāvastī, in the Jeta Grove, in the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada, together with a large gathering of monks, consisting of 1.250 monks, and with many Bodhisattvas, great beings. The Lord dressed himself early in the morning, put on his cloak and took his bowl, and entered the great city of Śrāvastī to collect alms. Having gone to the great city of Śrāvastī to collect alms, having eaten and returned from his round, the Lord then put away his bowl and cloak, washed his feet, and sat down on the seat arranged for him, crossing his legs, holding his body upright, and intent on fixing his mindfulness. Then many monks approached to where the Lord was, saluted his feet with their heads, thrice walked round him to the right, and sat down on one side.

2. At that time the Venerable Subhuti came to that assembly and sat down. Then the Venerable *Subhuti* rose from his seat, put his upper robe over one shoulder, placed his right knee on the ground, bent forth his folded hands towards the Lord, and said to the Lord: « It is wonderful, O Lord, it is exceedingly wonderful, O Well-Gone, how much the Bodhisattvas, the great beings have been helped with the greatest help by the Tathagata, the Arhat, the Fully Enlightened One. It is wonderful, O Lord, how much the Bodhisattvas, the great beings, have been favoured with the

highest favour by the Tathagata, the Arhat, the Fully Englightened One. How then, O Lord, should a son or daughter of good family, who have set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle, stand, how progress, how exert their thought? ».

After these words *the Lord* said to the Venerable Subhuthi: « Well said, well said, Subhuti. So it is, Subhuti, so it is, as you say. Helped are, Subhuti, the Bodhisattvas, the great beings with the greatest help by the Tathagata, favoured are the Bodhisattvas, the great beings with the highest favour by the Tathagata. Therefore, Subhuti, listen well, and with well-placed attention! I will teach you how someone who has set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle should stand, how progress, how exert his thoughht ».

« So be it, O Lord », the Venerable *Subhuti* replied to the Lord.

3. *The Lord*: « Here, Subhuti, someone who has set out in the vehicle of a Bodhisattva should produce a thought in this manner: 'As many beings as there are in the universe of beings, comprehended under the term 'beings', — either egg-born, or born from a womb, or moisture-born, or miraculously born; with or without form; with perception, without perception, or with neither perception nor no-perception, — as far as any conceivable universe of beings is conceived: all these should by me be led to Nirvana, into that Realm of Nirvana which leaves nothing behind. And yet, although innumerable beings have thus been led to Nirvana, no being at all has been led to Nirvana'. And why? If in a Bodhisattva the perception of a 'being' should take place, he could not be called a 'Bodhi-being'. And why? He is not to be called a Bodhi-being, in whom the perception of a self or a being

would take place, or the perception of a living soul or a person.

4. And again, Subhuti, not by a Bodhisattva who is supported by a thing should a gift be given, nor by one who is supported anywhere should a gift be given. Not by one who is supported by form should a gift be given, nor by one who is supported by sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, or mind-objects. For thus, Subhuti, should the Bodhi-being, the great being give a gift as one who is not supported by the perception of a sign. And why? That Bodhi-being, who unsupported gives a gift, his heap of merit, Subhuti, is not easy to measure. What do you think, Subhuti, is it easy to measure the extent of space in the East?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord.

The Lord: In like manner, is it easy to measure the extent of space in the South, West or North, downwards, upwards, in the intermediate directions, in all the ten directions all round?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord.

The Lord: Even so, that Bodhi-being who unsupported gives a gift, his heap of merit, Subhuti, is not easy to measure. It is thus, Subhuti, that someone who has set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle should give a gift, — as one who is not supported by the perception of a sign.

5. What do you think, Subhuti, can the Tathagata be seen by the possession of his marks?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, not by the possession of his marks can the Tathagata be seen. And why? What has been taught by the Tathagata as the possession of marks, that is truly a no-possession of no-marks.

The Lord: Wherever there is possession of marks there is fraud, wherever there is no-possession of no-marks there is no fraud. Hence the Tathagata is to be seen from no-marks as marks.

6. *Subhuti*: Will there be any beings in the future period, in the last time, in the last epoch, in the last 500 years, at the time of the collapse of the good doctrine, who, when these very words of the Sutra are being taught, will produce a true perception?

The Lord: Do not speak thus, Subhuti! Yes, there will be in the future period, in the last time, in the last epoch, in the last 500 years, at the time of the collapse of the good doctrine, beings who, when these very words of the Sutra are being taught, will produce a true perception. And again, Subhuti, there will be Bodhisattvas, there will be great beings, in the future period, in the last time, in the last epoch, in the last 500 years, at the time of the collapse of the good doctrine who are gifted with virtuous qualities, gifted with good conduct, gifted with wisdom, and who, when these very words of the Sutra are being taught, will produce a true perception. Moreover, Subhuti, these Bodhisattvas, these great beings will not be such as have honoured only one single Buddha, nor such as have planted their roots of merit under one single Buddha only. On the contrary, Subhuti, those Bodhisattvas, those great beings, who, when these very words of the Sutra are being taught, will find even one single thought of serene faith, will be such as have honoured many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas, such as have planted their roots of merit under many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas. Known they are, Subhuti, by the Tathagata through his Buddha-cognition, seen they are,

Subhuti, by the Tathagata with his Buddha-eye, fully known they are, Subhuti, to the Tathagata. And they all, Subhuti, will beget and acquire an immeasurable and incalculable heap of merit. And why? Because in these Bodhisattvas, these great beings, Subhuti, the perception of a self does not take place, nor the perception of a being, nor the perception of a soul, nor the perception of a person. Nor does there take place in these Bodhi-beings, these great beings, a perception of a dharma, and likewise no perception of a no-dharma. Nor Subhuti, does a perception or no-perception take place in them. And why? If, Subhuti, in these Bodhi-beings, these great beings, a perception of a dharma could take place, that would be with them a seizing on a self, seizing on a being, seizing on a soul, seizing on a person. And why? Because the Bodhi-being, the great being, should not seize upon a dharma or a no-dharma. Therefore this saying has been taught by the Tathagata with a hidden meaning, « By those who know the discourse on dharma like unto a raft, dharmas should be forsaken, much more so no-dharmas ».

7. *The Lord*: What do you think, Subhuti, *is* there any dharma which has been fully known by the Tathagata as 'the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment', or is there any dharma which has been demonstrated by the Tathagata?

Subhuti: No, as I understand the Lord's teaching, there is not any dharma which has been fully known by the Tathagata as 'the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment', and there is no dharma which has been demonstrated by the Tathagata. And why? This dharma which has been fully known or demonstrated by the Tathagata, — it is not to be seized, it is not to be talked about, it is neither dharma nor

no-dharma. And why? Because an Absolute exalts the Holy Persons.

8. *The Lord*: What do you think, Subhuti, if a son or daughter of good family had filled this world system of 1,000 million worlds with the seven treasures, and then gave it as a gift to the Tathagatas, Arhats, Fully Enlightened Ones, would that son or daughter of good family on the strength of that beget a great heap of merit?

Subhuti: Great, O Lord, great, O Well-Gone, would the heap of merit be which that son or daughter of good family would beget on the strength of that. And why? What was taught by the Tathagata as 'heap of merit', as no-heap that has been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore the Tathagata teaches, 'heap of merit, heap of merit'.

The Lord: And if again, Subhuti, a son or daughter of good family had filled this world system of 1,000 million worlds with the seven treasures, and gave it as a gift to the Tathagatas, Arhats, Fully Enlightened Ones, and if, on the other hand, someone else had taken from this discourse on dharma but one stanza of four lines, and were to demonstrate and illuminate it in full detail to others, then the latter would on the strength of this beget a greater heap of merit, immeasurable and incalculable. And why? Because from it has issued the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment of the Tathagatas, Arhats, Fully Enlightened Ones, and from it have issued the Buddhas, the Lords. And why? 'The Buddha's own and special dharmas, the Buddha's own and special dharmas' Subhuti, just as not the Buddha's own and special dharmas have they been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called 'the Buddha's own and special dharmas'.

9a. What do you think, Subhuti, does it occur to the Streamwinner, 'by me has the fruit of a Streamwinner been attained'?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, it does not occur to the Streamwinner 'by me has the fruit of a Streamwinner been attained'. And why? Because, O Lord, he has not won any dharma. Therefore is he called a Streamwinner. No form has been won, no sounds, smells, tastes, touchables or objects of mind. Therefore is he called a 'Streamwinner'. If, O Lord, it would occur to the Streamwinner, 'by me has the fruit of a Streamwinner been attained', then that would be in him a seizing of self, seizing of a being, seizing of a soul, seizing of a person.

9b. *The Lord*: What do you think, Subhuti, does it then occur to the Once-Returner, 'by me has the fruit of a Once-Returner been attained'?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, it does not occur to the Once-Returner, 'by me has the fruit of a Once-Returner been attained'. And why? Because there is not any dharma that has won Once-Returnership. Therefore is he called a Once-Returner.

9c. *The Lord*: What do you think, Subhuti, does it then occur to the Never-Returner, 'by me has the fruit of a Never-Returner been attained'?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, it does not occur to the Never-Returner, 'by me has the fruit of a Never-Returner been attained'. And why? Because there is not any dharma that has won Never-Returnership. Therefore is he called a Never-Returner.

9d. *The Lord*: What do you think, Subhuti, does it then occur to the Arhat, 'by me has Arhatship been attained'?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, it does not occur to the Arhat, 'by me Arhatship has been attained'. And why? Because there is not any dharma which is called 'Arhat'. Therefore is he called an Arhat. If, O Lord, it would occur to an Arhat, 'by me has Arhat-ship been attained', that would be in him a seizing on a self, seizing on a being, seizing on a soul, seizing on a person. 9e. And why? I am, O Lord, the one who has been pointed out by the Tathagata, Arhat, Fully Enlightened One as the foremost of those who dwell in Peace. I am, O Lord, an Arhat free from greed. And yet, O Lord, it does not occur to me, 'an Arhat am I and free from greed'. If to me, O Lord, it would thus occur, 'by me has Arhatship been attained', the Tathagata would not have declared of me, « the foremost of those who dwell in Peace, Subhuti, son of good family, dwells not anywhere, therefore is he called 'a dweller in Peace, a dweller in Peace' ».

10a. *The Lord*: What do you think, Subhuti, is there any dharma which has been taken up by the Tathagata when he was in the presence of Dipankara, the Tathagata, the Arhat, the Fully Enlightened One?

Subhuti: Not so, O Lord, there is not any dharma which has been taken up by the Tathagata when he was in the presence of Dipankara, the Tathagata, the Arhat, the Fully Enlightened One.

10b. *The Lord*: If any Bodhisattva would speak thus: 'I will create harmonious Buddha-fields', he would speak fal-

sely. And why? 'The harmonies of Buddha-fields, the harmonies of Buddha-fields', Subhuti, as no-harmonies have they been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called 'harmonious Buddha-fields'.

10c. Therefore then, Subhuti, the Bodhisattva, the great being, should thus produce an unsupported thought i.e. he should produce a thought which is nowhere supported, he should produce a thought which is not supported by form, he should produce a thought which is not supported by sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, or mind-objects. Suppose, Subhuti, there were a man, endowed with a body, a huge body, so that his personal existence were of such a kind as Sumeru, king of mountains. Do you think, Subhuti, that would be a huge personal existence?

Subhuti: Yes, huge, O Lord, huge, O Well-Gone, would his personal existence be. And why so? 'Personal existence, personal existence', as no-existence that has been taught by the Tathagata; for not, O Lord, is that existence or non-existence. Therefore is it called 'personal existence'.

11. *The Lord*: What do you think, Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges rivers as there are grains of sand in the large river Ganges, would the grains of sand in them be many?

Subhuti: Those Ganges rivers would indeed be many, much more so the grains of sand in them.

The Lord: This is what I announce to you, Subhuti, this is what I make known to you, — if some woman or man had filled with the seven treasures as many world systems as there would be grains of sand in those Ganges rivers, and would give them as a gift to the Tathagatas, Arhats,

Fully Enlightened Ones, — what do you think, Subhuti, would that woman or man on the strength of that beget a great heap of merit?

Subhuti: Great, O Lord, great, O Well-Gone, would be the heap of merit, immeasurable and incalculable, which a woman or man would beget on the strength of that.

The Lord: And if, Subhuti, on the one side a woman or man had filled so many world systems with the seven treasures, and given them as a gift to the Tathagatas, Arhats, Fully Enlightened Ones, — and if, on the other hand, a son or daughter of good family had taken up from this discourse on dharma but one stanza of four lines, and were to demonstrate and illuminate it for others, then the latter indeed would on the strength of that beget a greater heap of merit, immeasurable and incalculable.

12. Then again, Subhuti, that spot of earth where one has taken from this discourse on dharma but one stanza of four lines, taught it or illuminated it, that spot of earth would be like a shrine for the whole world with its Gods, men and Asuras. What then should we say of those who will bear in mind this discourse on dharma in its entirety, who will recite, study, and illuminate it in full detail for others? Most wonderfully blest, Subhuti, will they be. And on that spot of earth, Subhuti, either the Teacher dwells, or a sage representing him.

13.a) *Subhuti*: What then, O Lord, is (this) discourse on dharma, and how should I bear it in mind?

The Lord: 'Wisdom which has gone beyond', Subhuti, is this discourse on dharma called, and as such should you bear it in mind. And why? Just that which has been taught

by the Tathagata as the wisdom which has gone beyond, just that has been taught by the Tathagata as not gone beyond. Therefore is it called 'Wisdom which has gone beyond'.

13b. What do you think, Subhuti, is there any dharma which has been taught by the Tathagata?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, there is not any dharma which has been taught by the Tathagata.

13c. *The Lord*: What do you think, Subhuti, (when you consider) the number of particles of dust in this world system of 1,000 million worlds, — would they be many?

Subhuti: Many, O Lord, many, O Well-Gone, would the particles of dust be. And why? Because, O Lord, what was taught as particles of dust by the Tathagata, as no-particles that was taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called 'particles of dust'. And that which as a world system was taught by the Tathagata, as a no-system that has been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore is it called a 'world system'.

13d. *The Lord*: What do you think, Subhuti, is the Tathagata, Arhat, Fully Enlightened One to be seen by means of the 32 marks of the Superman?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, the Tathagata, Arhat, Fully Enlightened One is not to be seen by means of the 32 marks of the Superman. And why? Because those 32 marks of the Superman which were taught by the Tathagata, as no-marks they were taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called the '32 marks of the Superman'.

13e. *The Lord*: And again, Subhuti, suppose a woman or man would day by day renounce all they have and all they

are, as many times as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, and if they should renounce all they have and all they are for as many aeons as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, — but if someone else would, after taking from this discourse on dharma but one stanza of four lines, demonstrate and illuminate it to others, then this latter on the strength of that would beget a greater heap of merit, immeasurable and incalculable.

14a. Thereupon the Venerable *Subhuti*, by the impact of dharma, was moved to tears. Having shed tears, he thus spoke to the Lord: It is wonderful, O Lord, it is exceedingly wonderful, O Well-Gone, how well this discourse on dharma has been taught by the Tathagata, for the weal of those beings who have set out in the best vehicle, for the weal of those set out in the most excellent vehicle. Through it cognition has been produced in me. Not by me has such a discourse on dharma ever been heard before. Most wonderfully blest will be those Bodhisattvas who, when this Sutra is being taught, on hearing it will produce a true perception. And why? That which is true perception, that is indeed no true perception. Therefore the Tathagata teaches, 'true perception, true perception'.

14b. It is not difficult for me that I should accept and believe this discourse on dharma when it is being taught. But those beings who will be in a future period, in the last time, in the last epoch, in the last 500 years, at the time of the collapse of the good doctrine, and who, O Lord, will take up this discourse on dharma, bear it in mind, recite it, study it, and illuminate it in full detail for others, these will be most worderfully blest.

14c. In them, however, no perception of a self will take place, no perception of a being, no perception of a soul, no perception of a person. And why? That, O Lord, which is perception of self, that is indeed no perception. That which is perception of a being, perception of a soul, perception of a person, that is indeed no perception. And why? Because the Buddhas, the Lords have left all perceptions behind.

14d. *The Lord*: So it is, Subhuti, so it is. Most wonderfully blest will be those beings who, when this Sutra is being taught, will not tremble, nor be frightened nor terrified. And why? As the highest (paramā) perfection (pāramitā), Subhuti, has this been taught by the Tathagata, i.e. as no-perfection. And what the Tathagata teaches as the highest perfection, that also the innumerable (aparimāṇa) Blessed Buddhas do teach. Therefore is it called the 'highest perfection'.

14e. Moreover, Subhuti, that which is the Tathagata's perfection of patience, that is really no-perfection. And why? Because, Subhuti, when the king of Kalinga cut my flesh from every limb, at that time I had no perception of a self, no perception of a being, no perception of a soul, no perception of a person, nor had I any perception or no-perception. And why? If, Subhuti, at that time I had had a perception of self, I would also have had a perception of ill-will at that time. If I had had a perception of a being, a perception of a soul, a perception of a person, then I would also have had a perception of ill-will at that time. And why? By my superknowlege I know the past, 500 births, and how I have been the Rishi 'Preacher of Patience'. Then also have I had no perception of a self, no perception of a being, no perception of a soul, no perception of a person. Therefore then, Subhuti,

the Bodhi-being, the great being, after he has got rid of all perceptions, should produce a thought of utmost, right and perfect enlightenment. Unsupported by form should a thought be produced, unsupported by sounds, smells, tastes, touchables or mind-objects should a thought be produced, unsupported by dharma should a thought be produced, unsupported by no-dharma should a thought be produced, unsupported by anything should a thought be produced. And why? All supports have actually no support. It is therefore that the Tathagata teaches: By an unsupported Bodhisattva should a gift be given, not by one who is supported by forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables or mind-objects.

14f. And further, Subhuti, for the weal of all beings should a Bodhisattva renounce a gift in such a way. And why? This perception of a being, Subhuti, that is just a no-perception. Those all-beings of whom the Tathagata has spoken, they are indeed no-beings. And why? Because the Tathagata speaks in accordance with reality, speaks the truth, speaks of what is, not otherwise. A Tathagata does not speak falsely. 14g. But nevertheless, Subhuti, with regard to that dharma which the Tathagata has fully known, demonstrated, and meditated upon, on account of that there is neither truth nor fraud. A man who has entered darkness would not see anything. Just so should be viewed a Bodhisattva who has fallen among things, and who, fallen among things, renounces a gift. A man with eyes would, when the night becomes light and the sun has risen, see manifold forms. Just so should be viewed a Bodhisattva who has not fallen among things, and who, without having fallen among things, renounces a gift.

14h. Furthermore, Subhuti, those sons and daughters of good family, who will take up this discourse on dharma, will bear it in mind, will recite it, study it, and illuminate it in full detail for others, they have been known, Subhuti, by the Tathagata with his Buddha-cognition, they have been seen, Subhuti, by the Tathagata with his Buddha-eye, they have been fully known by the Tathagata. All these beings, Subhuti, will beget and acquire an immeasurable and incalculable heap of merit.

15a. And if again, Subhuti, a woman or man should renounce in the morning all they have and all they are as many times as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, and if at noon they should renounce all they have and all they are as many times as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, and if in the evening they should renounce all they have and all they are as many times as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, and if in this way they should renounce all they have and all they are for many hundreds of thousands of millions of milliards of aeons — and if someone else, on hearing this discourse on dharma, would not reject it, — then the latter would on the strength of that beget a greater heap of merit, immeasurable and incalculable. What then should we say of him who, after writing it, would learn it, bear it in mind, recite it, study it, and illuminate it in full detail for others? 15b. Moreover, Subhuti, unthinkable and incomparable is this discourse on dharma. And this discourse on dharma, Subhuti, has been taught by the Tathagata for the weal of beings who have set out in the best vehicle, for the weal of those who have set out in the most excellent vehicle. Those who will take up this discourse on dharma,

bear it in mind, recite it, study it, and illuminate it in full detail for others, they have been known, Subhuti, by the Tathagata with his Buddha-cognition, they have been seen, Subhuti, by the Tathagata with his Buddha-eye, they have been fully known by the Tathagata. All these beings, Subhuti, will be blest with an immeasurable heap of merit, they will be blest with a heap of merit unthinkable, incomparable, measureless and illimitable. All these beings, Subhuti, will carry along an equal share of enlightenment. And why? Because it is not possible, Subhuti, that this discourse on dharma could be heard by beings of inferior resolve, nor by such as have a self in view, a being, a soul, or a person. Nor can beings who have not taken the pledge of a Bodhi-being either hear this discourse on dharma, or take it up, bear it in mind, recite or study it. That cannot be. 15c. And again, Subhuti, the spot of earth where this Sutra will be revealed, that spot of earth will be worthy of worship by the whole world with its Gods, men and Asuras, that spot of earth will be worthy of being saluted respectfully, worthy of being honoured by circumambulation, — like a shrine will be that spot of earth.

16a. And yet, Subhuti, those sons and daughters of good family, who will take up these very Sutras, who will bear them in mind, recite them, study them, and wisely attend to them, and who will illuminate them in full detail for others, they will be humbled, and they will be well humbled. And why? The impure deeds which these beings have done in their former lives, and which are liable to lead them into the states of woe, — in this very life they will, by means of that humiliation, annul those impure deeds of their former lives, and they will reach the enlightenment of a Buddha.

16b. And why? I know by my superknowledge, Subhuti, that in the past period, during incalculable, quite incalculable aeons, there were 84,000 million milliards of Buddhas, farther and farther away from Dipankara, the Tathagata, Arhat, Fully Enlightened One, to whom I gave satisfaction by loyal service, and from whom I did not again become estranged. And if, on the one hand, Subhuti, I gave satisfaction to those Buddhas and Lords, without again becoming estranged from them, — and if, on the other hand, other people in the last time, the last epoch, the last 500 years, at the time of the collapse of the good doctrine, will take up these very Sutras, bear them in mind, recite and study them, and will illuminate them in full detail for others, — then again, Subhuti, compared with this heap of merit that former heap of merit does not approach one hundredth part, not one thousandth part, not a 100 thousandth part, not a 10 millionth part, nor a 100 millionth part, nor a 100.000 millionth part. It does not bear number, nor fraction, nor counting, nor similarity, nor comparison, nor resemblance.

16c. If moreover, Subhuti, I were to teach the heap of merit of those sons and daughters of good family, and how great a heap of merit those sons and daughters of good family will at that time beget and acquire, beings would become frantic and confused. Since, however, Subhuti, the Tathagata has taught this discourse on dharma as unthinkable, so just an unthinkable karma-result should be expected from it.

17a. *Subhuti*: How, O Lord, should someone stand, who has set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle, how progress, how exert thought?

The Lord: Here, Subhuti, someone who has set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle should thus produce a thought: 'all beings should be led by me to Nirvana, into that Realm of Nirvana which leaves nothing behind. And yet, after beings have thus been led to Nirvana, no being at all has been led to Nirvana'. And why? If in a Bodhisattva the perception of a being would take place, he should not be called a 'Bodhi-being'. If the perception of a soul, or the perception of a person would take place, he should not be called a 'Bodhi-being'. And why? He who has set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle, — he is not one of the dharmas. 17b. What do you think, Subhuti, *is* there any dharma by which the Tathagata, when he was in the presence of Dipankara, the Tathagata, has awoken to the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment?

Subhuti: As I understand the meaning of the Lord's teaching, there is not any dharma by which the Tathagata, when he was in the presence of Dipankara, the Tathagata, Arhat, Fully Enlightened One, has awoken to the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment.

The Lord: So it is, Subhuti, so it is, there is no dharma by which the Tathagata, when he was in the presence of Dipankara, the Tathagata, Arhat, Fully Enlightened One, has awoken to the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment. If again, Subhuti, some dharma had been fully known by the Tathagata, not of me would the Tathagata Dipankara have predicted: « You, young Brahmin, will in a future period be a Tathagata, Arhat, Fully Enlightened, by the name of Śākyamuni ». Because then, Subhuti, there is not any dharma by which the Tathagata, Arhat, Fully Enlightened One has fully known the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment, therefore the Tathagata Dipankara has predicted of

me: « You, young Brahmin, will in a future period be a Tathagata, Arhat, Fully Enlightened, by the name of Śākyamuni ». 17c. And why? 'Tathagata', Subhuti, of true Suchness that is a synonym. 17d. And whosoever, Subhuti, were to say: 'The Tathagata, the Arhat, the fully Enlightened One, has fully known the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment', he would speak falsely, and he would misrepresent me by seizing on what is not there. And why? There is not any dharma by which the Tathagata has fully known the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment. And that dharma which the Tathagata has fully known and demonstrated, on account of that there is neither truth nor fraud. Therefore the Tathagata teaches, 'all dharmas are the Buddha's own and special dharmas'. And why? 'All-dharmas', Subhuti, have as no-dharmas been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore all dharmas are called the Buddha's own and special dharmas.

17e. Suppose, Subhuti, a man were endowed with a body, a huge body.

Subhuti: That man who was spoken of by the Tathagata as 'endowed with a body, a huge body', as a no-body he has been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore is he called 'endowed with a body, a huge body'.

17f. *The Lord*: So it is, Subhuti, the Bodhisattva who would say, 'I will lead beings to Nirvana', he should not be called a 'Bodhi being'. And why? *Is* there, Subhuti, any dharma named 'Bodhi-being'?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, there is not any dharma named a 'Bodhi-being'.

The Lord: 'Beings, beings', Subhuti, as no-beings have they been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called

'beings'. Because of that the Tathagata teaches, 'selfless are all dharmas, unsubstantial, without a living soul, without personality'. 17g. If any Bodhisattva should say: 'I will create harmonious Buddha-fields', he likewise should not be called a Bodhisattva. And why? 'The harmonies of Buddha-fields, the harmonies of Buddha-fields', Subhuti, as no harmonies have they been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called 'harmonious Buddha-fields'. 17h. The Bodhisattva, Subhuti, who is intent on 'without self are the dharmas, without self are the dharmas', he has been declared by the Tathagata, the Arhat, the Fully Enlightened One to be a Bodhi-being, a great being.

18a. What do you think, Subhuti, does the fleshly eye of the Tathagata exist?

Subhuti: So it is, O Lord, the fleshly eye of the Tathagata does exist.

The Lord: What do you think, Subhuti, does the heavenly eye of the Tathagata exist?

Subhuti: So it is, O Lord, the heavenly eye of the Tathagata does exist.

The Lord: What do you think, Subhuti, does the wisdom eye of the Tathagata exist?

Subhuti: So it is, O Lord, the wisdom eye of the Tathagata does exist.

The Lord: What do you think, Subhuti, does the dharma-eye of the Tathagata exist?

Subhuti: So it is, O Lord, the dharma-eye of the Tathagata does exist.

The Lord: What do you think, Subhuti, does the Buddha-eye of the Tathagata exist?

Subhuti: So it is, O Lord, the Buddha-eye of the Tathagata does exist.

18b. *The Lord*: What do you think, Subhuti, as many grains of sand as there are in the great river Ganges, — has now the Tathagata spoken of these grains of sand?

Subhuti: So it is, O Lord, so it is, O Well-Gone, the Tathagata has spoken of these grains of sand.

The Lord: What do you think, Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges rivers as there are grains of sand in the great river Ganges, and if there were as many world systems as there are grains of sand in these, would those world systems be many?

Subhuti: So it is, O Lord, so it is, O Well-Gone, these world systems would be many.

The Lord: As many beings as there are in these world systems, of them I know, in my wisdom, the manifold trends of thought. And why? 'Trends of thought, trends of thought', Subhuti, as no-trends have they been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called 'trends of thought'. And why? Past thought is not got at; future thought is not got at; present thought is not got at.

19. What do you think, Subhuti, if a son or daughter of good family had filled this world system of 1,000 million worlds with the seven treasures, and then gave it as a gift to the Tathagatas, the Arhats, the Fully Enlightened Ones, would that son or daughter of good family on the strength of that beget a great heap of merit?

Subhuti: Much, O Lord, much, O Well-Gone.

The Lord: So it is, Subhuti, so it is; on the strength of that this son or daughter of good family would beget a great

heap of merit, immeasurable and incalculable. And why? 'Heap of merit, heap of merit', as no heap has that been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore is it called 'heap of merit'. If there would be a heap of merit, the Tathagata would not have taught 'heap of merit, heap of merit'. 20a. What do you think, Subhuti, is the Tathagata to be seen by means of the accomplishment of his form-body?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, the Tathagata is not to be seen by means of the accomplishment of his form-body. And why? 'Accomplishment of his form-body, accomplishment of his form-body', this, O Lord, has been taught by the Tathagata as no-accomplishment. Therefore is it called 'accomplishment of his form-body'.

20b. *The Lord*: What do you think, Subhuti, is the Tathagata to be seen through his possession of marks?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, the Tathagata is not to be seen through his possession of marks. And why? This possession of marks, O Lord, which has been taught by the Tathagata, as a no-possession of no-marks this has been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore is it called 'possession of marks'.

21a. *The Lord*: What do you think, Subhuti, does it occur to the Tathagata, 'by me dharma is demonstrated'?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, it does not occur to the Tathagata, 'by me dharma is demonstrated'.

The Lord: Whosoever would say, 'the Tathagata has demonstrated dharma', he would speak falsely, he would misrepresent me by seizing on what is not there. And why? 'Demonstration of dharma, demonstration of dharma',

Subhuti, there is not any dharma which could be got at as demonstration of dharma.

21b. *Subhuti*: Are there, O Lord, any beings in the future, in the last time, in the last epoch, in the last 500 years, at the time of the collapse of the good doctrine who, on hearing such dharmas, will truly believe?

The Lord: They, Subhuti, are neither beings, nor no-beings. And why? 'Beings, beings', Subhuti, as no-beings have all these been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called 'beings'. 22. What do you think, Subhuti, is there any dharma by which the Tathagata has fully known the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, there is not any dharma by which the Tathagata has fully known the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment.

The Lord: So it is, Subhuti, so it is. Not even the least (*aṇu*) dharma is there found or got at. Therefore is it called 'utmost (*anuttara*), right and perfect enlightenment'. 23. Furthermore, Subhuti, self-identical (*sama*) is that dharma, and nothing is therein at variance. Therefore is it called 'utmost, right (*samyak*) and perfect (*sam-*) enlightenment'. Self-identical through the absence of a self, of a being, of a soul, of a person, the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment is fully known through all the wholesome dharmas. And why? 'Wholesome dharmas, wholesome darmas', Subhuti, — yet as no-dharmas have they been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called 'wholesome dharmas'.

24. And again, Subhuti, if a woman or man had piled up the seven treasures until their bulk equalled that of all the Sumerus, kings of mountains, in the world system of

1,000 million worlds, and would give them as a gift to the Tathagatas, Arhats, Fully Enlightened Ones, — and if, on the other hand, a son or daughter of good family would take up from this Prajñāpāramitā, this discourse on dharma, but one stanza of four lines, and demonstrate it to others, — compared with his heap of merit the former heap of merit does not approach one hundredth part, etc. until we come to (see ch. 16b), it will not bear any comparison.

25. What do you think, Subhuti, does it occur to a Tathagata, 'by me have beings been set free'? Not thus should one see it, Subhuti. And why? There is not any being who has been set free by the Tathagata. Again, if there had been any being who had been set free by the Tathagata, then surely there would have been on the part of the Tathagata a seizing of self, seizing of a being, seizing of a soul, seizing of a person. 'Seizing of a self', as a no-seizing, Subhuti, that has been taught by the Tathagata. And yet it has been seized upon by foolish common people. 'Foolish common people', Subhuti, as really no people have they been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called 'foolish common people'. 26a. What do you think, Subhuti, is the Tathagata to be seen by means of his possession of marks?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, as I understand the meaning of the Lord's teaching, the Tathagata is not to be seen by means of his possession of marks.

The Lord: Well said, well said, Subhuti. So it is, Subhuti, so it is, as you say. The Tathagata is not to be seen by means of his possession of marks. And why? If, Subhuti, the Tathagata were one who could be seen by his possession of marks, then also the universal monarch would be a Tathagata. Therefore the Tathagata is not to be seen by means of his possession of marks.

Subhuti: As I, O Lord, understand the Lord's teaching, the Tathagata is not to be seen through his possession of marks.

Further *the Lord* taught on that occasion these stanzas:

Those who by my form did see me,
And those who followed me by voice,
Wrong the efforts they engaged in,
Me those people will not see.

26b. From the dharma should one see the Buddhas,
For the dharma-bodies are the guides.
Yet dharma's true nature should not be discerned,
Nor can it, either, be discerned.

27. What do you think, Subhuti, has the Tathagata fully known the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment through his possession of marks? Not so should you see it, Subhuti. And why? Because the Tathagata could surely not have fully known the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment through his possession of marks. Nor should anyone, Subhuti, say to you, 'those who have set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle have conceived the destruction of a dharma, or its annihilation'. Not so should you see it, Subhuti! And why? Those who have set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle have not conceived the destruction of a dharma nor its annihilation.

28. And again, Subhuti, if a son or daughter of good family had filled with the seven treasures as many world systems as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, and gave them as a gift to the Tathagatas, Arhats, Fully Enlighte-

ned Ones, — and if on the other hand a Bodhisattva would gain the patient acquiescence in dharmas which are nothing of themselves and which fail to be produced, then this latter would on the strength of that beget a greater heap of merit, immeasurable and incalculable. Moreover, Subhuti, the Bodhisattva, the great being, should not acquire a heap of merit.

Subhuti: Surely, O Lord, the Bodhisattva, the great being should acquire a heap of merit?

The Lord: 'Should acquire', Subhuti, not 'should seize upon'. Therefore is it said 'should acquire'.

29. Whosoever says that the Tathagata goes or comes, or stands or sits, or lies down, he does not understand the meaning of my teaching. And why? 'Tathagata' is called one who has not gone anywhere, and who has not come from anywhere. Therefore is he called 'the Tathagata, the Arhat, the Fully Enlightened One'.

30a. And again, Subhuti, if a son or daughter of good family were to grind as many world systems as there are particles of dust in this world system of 1,000 million worlds, as finely as they can be ground with incalculable vigour, (and in fact reduce them to) something like a collection of atomic quantities, what do you think, Subhuti, would that be an enormous collection of atomic quantities?

Subhuti: So it is, O Lord, so it is, O Well-Gone, enormous would that collection of atomic quantities be. And why? If, O Lord, there would have been an enormous collection of atomic quantities, the Lord would not have called it an 'enormous collection of atomic quantities'. And why?

What was taught by the Tathagata as a 'collection of atomic quantities', as a no-collection that was taught by the Tathagata. Therefore is it called a 'collection of atomic quantities'. 30b. And what has been taught by the Tathagata as 'the world-system of 1,000 million worlds', as no-system that has been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore is it called 'the world-system of 1,000 million worlds'. And why? If, O Lord, there would have been a world-system, that would have been (a case of) seizing on a material object, and what was taught as 'seizing on a material object' by the Tathagata, just as no-seizing that was taught by the Tathagata. Therefore is it called 'seizing on a material object'.

The Lord: And also, Subhuti, that 'seizing on a material object' is inexpressible, and not to be talked about. It is not a dharma nor a no-dharma. And yet it has been seized upon by foolish common people. 31a. And why? Because who soever would say that the view of a self has been taught by the Tathagata, the view of a being, the view of a living soul, the view of a person, would he, Subhuti, be speaking right?

Subhuti: No indeed, O Lord, no indeed, O Well-Gone, He would not be speaking right. And why? That which has been taught by the Tathagata as 'view of a self', as a no-view that has been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore is it called 'view a self'.

31b. *The Lord*: It is thus, Subhuti, that someone who has set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle should know, see, and resolve upon all dharmas. And he should know, see, and resolve upon them in such a way that he does not set up the perception of a dharma. And why? 'Perception of dharma, perception of dharma', Subhuti, as no-perception has this

been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore is it called "perception of dharma'.

32a. And finally, Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva, a great being had filled world systems immeasurable and incalculable with the seven treasures, and gave them as a gift to the Tathagatas, the Arhats, the Fully Enlightened Ones, — and if, on the other hand, a son or daughter of good family had taken from this Prajñāpāramitā, this discourse on dharma, but one stanza of four lines, and were to bear it in mind, demonstrate, recite and study it, and illuminate it in full detail for others, on the strength of that this latter would beget a greater heap of merit, immeasurable and incalculable. And how would he illuminate it? So as not to reveal. Therefore is it said, 'he would illuminate'.

As stars, a fault of vision, as a lamp,
A mock show, dew drops, or a bubble,
A dream, a lightning flash, or cloud,
So should one view what is conditioned.

32b. Thus spoke the Lord. Enraptured, the Elder Subhuti, the monks and nuns, the pious lay-men and lay women, and the Bodhisattvas, and the whole world with its Gods, men, Asuras and Gandharvas rejoiced in the teaching of the Lord.

GLOSSARY

a-grāhya, 7, gzuṅ-du ma mchis, not to be seized

a-cintya, 15b, 16c, bsam-gyis mi khyab-pa, unthinkable.

The sentence at 16c refers to a famous passage in Anguttara Nikāya (II 80; also Ekottarāgama 18, 16): « These four unthinkables (=not fit for being thought, cy) should not be thought about; frenzy (*ummāda*) will be the portion of him who does so: 1. The Buddha-range of the Buddhas (so also A xiii 277) (=the proceeding and might of the Buddha-virtues of the cognition of the all-knowing, etc., cy); 2. the range of the trance of one who is in trance (this refers to the superknowledges, cy); 3. the results of karma (as in Vajr.); 4. speculation on the world (i.e. who made the sun, moon, etc.; cy). Asl I 24, referring to this passage, says, as Vajr. here, that, as a result of thinking the unthinkable, *citta-vikkhepam pāpuṇāti*.

« Unthinkable » excludes both the possibility of thinking about something, and the desirability of doing so. In A viii 193, the *prajñāpāramitā* is called *acintyā* because *prajñāpāramitā na cittena jñatavyā na citta-gamanīyā*. Vasubandhu, in his commentary to Triṃśikā p. 44 defines its various meanings: 'unthinkable - because it is not accessible to deliberation, because one must experience it by oneself, and also because of the absence of an example ».

aṇu, 22, cuṅ-zad, least

aṇḍa-ja, 3, sgo-ṅa-las skyes-pa, egg-born

a-tulya: incomparable: 15b: mtshuṅs ma med (de); 16c, Ti -